

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANILA 18917 070322Z

63

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13

AID-05 OES-06 SCS-03 DHA-02 /084 W

----- 021748

R 060919Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3589

INFO CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 18917

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: GOP CLOSES OPPOSITION CHURCH PUBLICATIONS "SIGNS  
OF THE TIMES" AND "COMMUNICATOR"

SUMMARY: CONSTABULARY TROOPS CLOSED DOWN CHURCH PUBLICATIONS  
"SINGS OF THE TIMES" AND "COMMUNICATOR" AFTERNOON OF DEC 5.  
NO ARRESTS MADE YET. LOCAL PRESS CORPS WAS SUMMONED TO  
WITNESS CLOSING OF "SINGS" WHICH HAS LONG BEEN SOLE QUASI-  
LEGITIMATE OUTLET FOR SHARP CRITICISM OF GOP. STATEMENT BY  
GENERAL RAMOS SAID PAPERS CLOSED ON GROUNDS OF SUBVERSIVE  
CONTENT. CLOSURES ARE PREDICTABLE OUTGROWTH OF CONTINUING  
CAMPAIGN AGAINST "CHRISTIAN LEFT", AND MAY BE REGARDED AS  
SIGNIFICANT BLOW AGAINST REMAINING FREEDOM OF PRESS IN  
PHILIPPINES. END SUMMARY.

1. ON AFTERNOON OF DEC 5 CONSTABULARY (METRECOM) TROOPS  
PADLOCKED OFFICES OF CHURCH PUBLICATIONS "SINGS OF THE TIMES"  
(PUBLISHED BY ASSOCIATION OF MAJOR RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS IN  
THE PHILIPPINES) AND "THE COMMUNICATOR" (PUBLISHED BY  
CATHOLIC NATIONAL OFFICE OF MASS MEDIA). NO ARRESTS  
WERE MADE, BUT PRINTING EQUIPMENT AND PRESS RUNS OF  
PUBLICATIONS WERE CONFISCATED. LOCAL PRESS CORPS WAS  
SUMMONED TO WITNESS SHUTDOWN OF "SINGS OF THE TIMES,"  
WHICH SANCE ADVENT OF MARTIAL LAW HAS BEEN ONLY DOMESTIC  
PUBLICATION REGULARLY TO INDULGE IN ALL-OUT CRITICISM  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANILA 18917 070322Z

OF MARCOS REGIME (WITH EXCEPTION OF COMMUNIST UNDER-

GROUND PRESS). CLOSURE WAS FRONT-PAGE STROY IN ALL  
MANILA PAPERS DEC 6.

2. ACCORDING PRESS ACCOUNTS MILITARY HAS GIVEN "GO  
SIGNAL" TO FILE CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST PUBLISHERS OF  
BOTH PUBLICATIONS FOR INCITING TO SEDITION IN VIOLATION  
OF ARTICLE 142 OF PENAL CODE AND PRESIDENTIAL DECREE 970.  
(SUGGESTION IS THAT ARRESTS MAY FOLLOW.) EXPLANATORY  
STATEMENT BY PC COMMANDER RAMOS APPARENTLY MADE AVAIL-  
ABLE TO PRESS SAID ARTICLES IN "SINGS OF THE TIMES" WERE  
QUOTE INVARIABLY ANTI-GOVERNMENT IF NOT A CATEGORICAL  
INDICTMENT OF THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION WITH THE END  
VIEW OF DISCREDITING THE ESTABLISHED ORDER . END QUOTE.  
AFTER SUMMARIZING FAVORITE "SINGS" TOPICS (ALLEGED  
MILITARY ABUSES, TORTURE OF POLITICAL DETAINEES, LABOR  
UNREST, CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT, ETC.), RAMOS NOTED  
THAT MUCH CONTENT DRAWN FROM FOREIGN PUBLICATIONS,  
INCLUDING "STARS AND STRIPES." HE NOTED THAT MANY  
ARTICLES WERE WRITTEN BY ARNOLD ZEITLIN (RECENTLY  
EXPELLED AP BUREAU CHIEF) AND BERNARD WIDEMAN (FAR  
EWASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW AND STRINGER FOR WASHINGTON  
POST). RAMOS TERMED WIDEMAN'S ARTICLES "LIKEWISE  
SUBVERSIVE, SEDITIOUS, AND LIBELOUS."

3. PHOTOGRAPH IN "BULLETIN TODAY" SHOWED FR LOPE CASTILLO  
(INCORRECTLY IDENTIFIED AS JESUIT) READING ARREST, SEARCH  
AND SEIZURE ORDER FOR "SINGS OF THE TIMES" WHICH HE AND  
HIS FEMALE COUNTERPART, SISTER CHRISTINE TAN, GUIDED  
IN THEIR CAPACITIES AS CO-LEADERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF  
MAJOR RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS. "COMMUNICATOR" IS HEADED BY  
AN AMERICAN JESUIT, FR JAMES REUTER, WHO WAS OUT OF TOWN  
WHEN SHUTDOWN TOOK PLACE. SOME PRESS ACCOUNTS INACCU-  
RATELY MADE CLOSURES SOULD LIKE BLOW AT MAIN BODY OF  
CHURCH, TATHER THAN AGAINST MINORITY LIBERAL ACTIVIST  
ELEMENT (E.G. TIMES JOURNAL REFERENCE TO "SIGNS" AS  
"OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CATHOLIC HEIRARCHY IN THE  
PHILIPPINES" WHICH IT CERTAINLY IS NOT.)

4. "COMMUNICATOR" WHICH HAS BEEN MUCH LESS CONSISTENTLY  
AND STRIDENTLY POLITICAL IN CHARACTER THAN "SIGNS OF  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03     MANILA 18917 070322Z

THE TIMES" (AND UNLIKE IT IS REGISTERED IN ACCORDANCE  
WITH GOP REGULATION) RECEIVED SOME USAID (PATH-FINDER)  
FUNDING IN SUPPORT OF POPULATION EDUCATION CONTENT WHICH  
WAS ORIGINALLY A MAJOR FOCUS OF THIS PUBLICATION. AID  
FUNDS WERE CHANNELED THROUGH THE POPULATION COMMISSION  
(POPCOM) AND TERMINATED ON SEPTEMBER 30, 976.

5. COMMENT: "COMMUNICATOR" HAS BEEN CRITICAL OF GOP

ON SOME SENSITIVE ISSUES (SUCH AS CHICO DAM). ITS EDITOR, FR REUTER, IS RESPECTED, ESSENTIALLY MODERATE FIGURE. POSSIBILITY CANNOT BE RULED OUT THAT GOP MAY TAKE ACTION AGAINST HIM. EVEN IF NOT, CLOSURE OF "COMMUNICATOR" LIKELY TO STIR ADDITIONAL CONCERN AMONG JESUITS IN US AND ELSEWHERE.

6. DEMISE OF "SIGNS OF THE TIMES" IS LESS SURPRISING.

"SIGNS" HAS LONG BEEN UNDER PRESSURE AND RECEIVED CRYPTIC GOP ORDER TO CLOSE (WHICH IT IGNORED) EARLIER THIS YEAR. IT HAS ENJOYED QUASI-LEGAL STATUS AT BEST, HAVING REFUSED TO FULFILL REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS DEMANDED BY PRINT MEDIA COUNCIL. UP TO NEW SOME ELEMENTS IN GOP APPARENTLY FELT THAT "SINGS" SERVED USEFUL PURPOSE BY DEMONSTRATING FREEDOM OF PRESS. MILITAR HARLINERS WERE NEVER PERSUADED BY THAT ARGUMENT, AND IN CURRENT CONTEXT OF CRACKDOWN ON "CHRISTIAN LEFT", THEIR VIEW HAS PREVAILED.

6. MIMEOGRAPHED ON NEWSPRINT, "SIGNS" CIRCULATED AN ESTIMATE 3 TO 4,000 COPIES WEEKLY THROUGHOUT PHILIPPINES AND READERSHIP WAS UNDOUBTEDLY MUCH HIGHER THAN CIRCULATION FIGURES WOULD INDICATE. FOR MANY FILIPINOS IT WAS THE SOLE REGULAR SOURCE OF MATERIAL CRITICAL OF THE MARCOS REGIME. IT ALSO SERVED AS REGULAR FORUM FOR STATEMENTS BY LIBERAL MINORITY WITHIN CHURCH (E.G. FINAL ISSUE OF NOV 27 CONTAINED ARTICLE ON ARRESTS IN DAVAO, "FACTUAL ACCOUNT" OF DEPORTATION OF FR. GERLICK AND BOOMS, AND LETTER FROM FIVE MINDANAO BISHOPS CRITICIZING LATEST "VIOLATIONS OF OUR PEOPLE'S HUMAN RIGHTS") SPECIAL STUDIES BY "SIGNS" HAVE INCLUDED LENGTHY ACCOUNTS OF SOCIAL ABUSE IN THE SUGAR INDUSTRY AND A COMPILATION ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE WHICH

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04     MANILA 18917 070322Z

SERVED AS THE BASIS FOR THE SUBSEQUENT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT. (IT MAY BE ASSUMED THAT THE SPECIAL STUDIES HAVE BEEN BANNED ALONG WITH THE WEEKLY PUBLICATION.) SHUTDOWN MUST BE JUDGED A SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN THE MINIMAL PRESS FREEDOM WHICH REMAINED IN THE PHILIPPINES SUBSEQUENT TO MARTIAL LAW, AND FOCUS ON ARTICLES BY ZEITLIN AND WIDEMAN (LATTER WAS AMONG PRESS CORPS THAT WITNESSED PADLOCKING OF "SINGS" OFFICE) WILL STAND AS ANOTHER WARNING TO FOREIGN AS WELL AS DOMESTIC CORRESPONDENTS. SULLIVAN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PUBLICATIONS, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 06 DEC 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** izenbei0  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976MANILA18917  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760450-1256  
**From:** MANILA  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19761270/aaaaci.hl.tel  
**Line Count:** 164  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** izenbei0  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 02 JUN 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <02 JUN 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <30 SEP 2004 by izenbei0>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** GOP CLOSES OPPOSITION CHURCH PUBLICATIONS "SIGNS OF THE TIMES" AND "COMMUNICATOR" SUMMARY: CONSTABULARY TROOPS CLOSED DOWN CHURCH PU  
**TAGS:** PINT, RP  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006